

An aerial photograph of a river flowing through a lush green forested valley. The river is a vibrant blue-green color, winding its way through the dense forest. In the background, a large lake is visible, surrounded by steep, forested mountains. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, and the overall scene is one of natural beauty and tranquility.

STRONGHOLDS FOR THE FUTURE

WILD SALMON CENTER *Impact Report*



Letter from the President

Summer 2025

There's a point every May when it's hard for me to think about anything other than spring Chinook. I'll be out somewhere in Tillamook Bay, swimming flies through the water column, watching and waiting. It's about the fish, of course. But it's also not about the fish. It's about the river, the forests around me, and also something within me: a deep, primordial drive to connect with wild things.

Wild salmon and steelhead are the heart of our work because they're iconic, powerful creatures who make heroic odysseys to the far reaches of the ocean and back. They're also keystone species. From bears and towering Sitka spruce trees to eagles to tiny caddisflies, nearly everything in a salmon watershed is nourished by returning wild fish. When we protect salmon, steelhead, and trout, the impacts ripple far beyond the rivers they call home. It's a circle, in a way—because these creatures also call us home, to great watersheds that ring the North Pacific.

We built Wild Salmon Center's stronghold strategy 25 years ago to ensure that salmon can continue to thrive for generations, and us alongside them. By proactively protecting our greatest salmon rivers—the stunning river systems in these pages—we also protect global food security, biodiversity, and climate resilience. This winter, in the scientific journal *Fisheries*, we published insights from the stronghold strategy in action. Now, conservationists and fisheries managers around the world can build on our experience, successes, and lessons learned.

More than ever, we need the story of salmon, and the endurance and creativity they represent. This past year, we worked with film crews in some of the most special places on earth—places like Bristol Bay—to bring this story to everyone. You'll be able to experience this magic yourself when the first-ever giant-screen salmon film arrives in IMAX theaters in 2026.

In these pages, we hope you'll connect with this powerful story—from the sweeping land protections our coalition helped to secure in Alaska to our painstaking coho recovery campaign in Oregon. Backed by a stellar team and steadfast supporters, I've committed my life to protecting our best rivers and all of their benefits—benefits including that sense of wildness that makes us feel alive. Thank you for joining us in this endeavor.

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read "Guido".

Guido Rahr
President and Chief Executive



Bristol Bay, Alaska

Jason Ching



SALMON STRONGHOLDS

For decades, Wild Salmon Center has worked to proactively protect the world's greatest remaining salmon, steelhead, and trout watersheds—strongholds—because they, in turn, safeguard our food security, plant and animal diversity, and climate resilience. This is the stronghold strategy in action.

THREE PILLARS



Every stronghold needs **protections** for land and water.



Their salmon runs should be managed for **wild fish abundance and diversity**.



And each needs **local stewards**: heroes to keep these rivers safe for generations.

STRONGHOLDS OF THE PACIFIC

Wild Salmon Center and our partners protect the world's greatest remaining strongholds
—more than 20 river systems comprising at least 119 watersheds.





These watersheds:



Span an area of **126 million** acres



Sequester **6.1 billion** tons
of carbon a year



Welcome average annual returns of
120 million wild salmon

PROTECTIONS FOR LAND AND WATER

Across the North Pacific, every salmon stronghold needs layered policies that will protect land and water over decades, weathering political shifts and economic pressure.

Siletz River, Oregon

David Herasimtschuk



IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

35.8 MILLION ACRES of habitat safeguarded in parks, protected areas, and land designations across the Pacific Rim.

60,240 MILES of Oregon rivers and streams safeguarded through expanded riparian habitat rules.

All landscape-level ecological **THREATS BLOCKED** to date across the stronghold network: from habitat loss in the Russian Far East to the proposed Pebble Mine and Susitna Dam in Alaska.

In Alaska, standing up for public land values

In Alaska, long-standing federal law protects 50.1 million acres from mineral, oil, and gas development. This law has helped to keep intact large landscapes like the Copper and West Susitna river regions—some of the last of their kind left in the United States. Called “D-1” lands, these acres are managed by the Bureau of Land Management. They help drive a \$3.1 billion outdoor recreation economy and support all five species of Pacific salmon—along with grayling, char, and Dolly Varden and rainbow trout—three of North America’s largest caribou herds, and a vast number of migratory birds.

In 2020, federal public land orders aimed to strip protections from 28 million acres of D-1 lands—including 1.2 million in Bristol Bay. To date, overwhelming support for these protections from Wild Salmon Center, Alaska

business owners, Tribes, hunters, anglers, mushers, and outdoor enthusiasts have convinced the U.S. Department of the Interior to keep them in place.

An expansive new Trump Administration executive order aims to eliminate protections for these public lands once again. As the Secretary of the Interior reexamines these protections, Wild Salmon Center is joining Alaskans to make the case that conserving public lands is good not just for the state’s vital fish and wildlife populations, but also for Alaskan communities and the national economy.

In the United States, as in other nations, policies shift with economic pressures and political administrations. Through layered safeguards—D-1 land protections in addition to other safeguards—we aim to position strongholds to weather these pressures. That’s why land and water protections are key to our strategy.

ALASKA SUCCESSES

For three years, Wild Salmon Center and our partners led a campaign to keep **federal protections** for 28 million acres of Alaska public lands.

An August 2024 decision by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior reasserted that these lands should remain safe from mineral entry and oil and gas development.

5-YEAR GOAL: Ensure that existing public land protections remain in place across Alaska, maintaining these intact large landscapes for hunting, fishing, and subsistence gathering.



A proposed industrial road in Alaska’s **West Susitna** region would slice through pristine salmon streams, a state game refuge, backcountry hunting areas, and the Iditarod Trail.



Defending a wild West Susitna

Since 2014, state agencies have pushed to build a publicly-funded **100-mile road that threatens at least 83 free-flowing salmon streams** in Alaska’s West Susitna region—all to benefit speculative mining companies. In 2024, Wild Salmon Center and a coalition of local leaders inspired thousands of Alaskans to speak up for a wild West Su. Next, we’re asking the state legislature to stop this \$600 million project.

A scenic landscape photograph showing a large, rugged mountain range in the background under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. In the middle ground, a wide river flows through a valley, flanked by dense evergreen forests. The foreground is filled with the tops of several tall, green evergreen trees, some of which are slightly out of focus. The overall scene is a natural, wilderness area.

Land and water protections are a key pillar of
Wild Salmon Center's stronghold strategy.

Alaska strongholds like the **SUSITNA RIVER** benefit from federal D-1 land protections that limit mineral, oil, and gas development. Recent executive orders endanger these long-standing protections.

Building on our wins in Bristol Bay

In the past few years, we've made significant progress in our long campaign to protect Bristol Bay, Alaska—the world's largest sockeye salmon fishery—from the Pebble Mine project.

That started in 2020, with a U.S. Army Corps permit rejection for this massive open pit mine under the first Trump Administration. It continued in 2023, when the Environmental Protection Agency invoked section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act to make the headwaters around the Pebble Deposit off limits to mining. Together these decisions protect Bristol Bay's world-class salmon fishery, local communities, subsistence users, hundreds of small businesses, more than 22,000 jobs, and a \$2.2 billion-per-year regional economy.

But despite our efforts to stop Pebble Mine, the threat continues. Northern Dynasty Minerals, the Canadian

company backing the Pebble Mine, has challenged both decisions in court and vows to aggressively pursue the mine. In addition, 20 other mining claims still exist outside Pebble's footprint. And if a 2025 executive order succeeds in stripping long-standing federal land protections across Alaska (see page 8), 1.2 million acres in the Bristol Bay region could be opened, for the first time, to mineral extraction.

"Victories like EPA's Clean Water Act decision are moments to celebrate, and we do," says Wild Salmon Center Alaska Director Emily Anderson. "But we also know that we must be vigilant. We have more work to do to protect Bristol Bay and its irreplaceable fishery."

That means we're still working hard for our ultimate goal: permanent, whole-watershed protections for America's most productive wild salmon stronghold. Because some places are too special to ever put at risk.

ALASKA SUCCESSES

In 2020, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers rejected a key permit for the **Pebble Mine**.

In 2023, **Clean Water Act protections** made the headwaters of Bristol Bay's Nushagak and Kvichak Rivers—the site of the Pebble Deposit—off limits to hardrock mining.

A 2024 federal decision to retain federal **D-1 land protections** bans mining and oil and gas development across 1.2 million additional acres in the Bristol Bay region.

5-YEAR GOAL: Expand protections across the state-designated **Bristol Bay Fisheries Reserve**—an area comprising roughly 23 million acres.

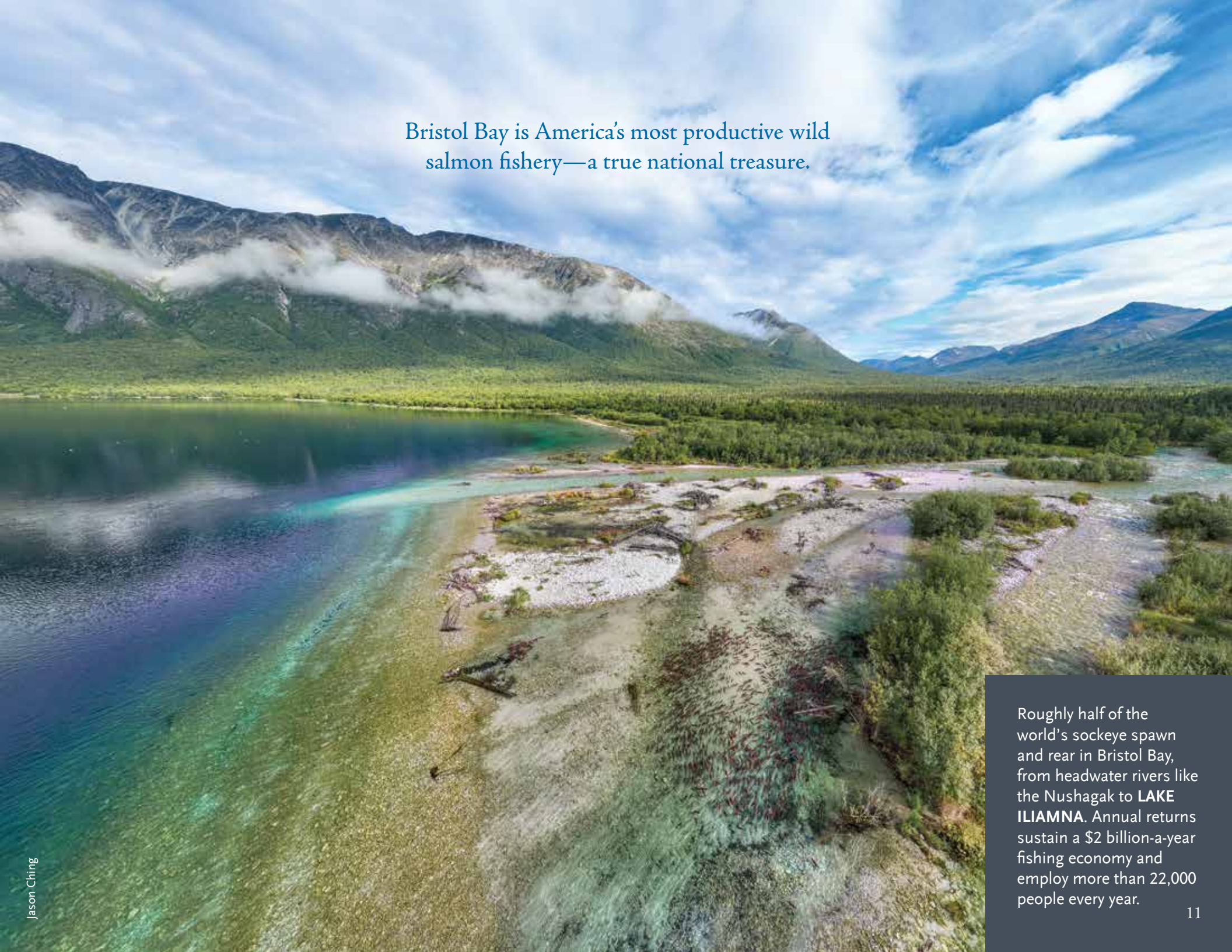


In addition to sockeye, **Bristol Bay** supports rainbow trout, coho salmon, and innumerable other species.



Layers of protection

In May 2025, Alaska state legislators introduced the Bristol Bay Forever Act. If passed, it would safeguard the **36,000-square-mile Bristol Bay Fisheries Reserve** from large-scale metallic sulfide mining: the type of mining most harmful to salmon. This vital piece of legislation would build on federal protections to ensure the future of the world's largest salmon fishery and all who depend on it.



Bristol Bay is America's most productive wild salmon fishery—a true national treasure.

Roughly half of the world's sockeye spawn and rear in Bristol Bay, from headwater rivers like the Nushagak to **LAKE ILIAMNA**. Annual returns sustain a \$2 billion-a-year fishing economy and employ more than 22,000 people every year.

Transforming Oregon's water future

Cold, clean water in streams: without it, salmon conservation literally stops. But worsening droughts, climate volatility, and heavier water use are challenging this essential resource across the Pacific Northwest. That's why, in 2020, Wild Salmon Center launched the Oregon Water Initiative to fix the broken state laws that are drying up our rivers.

Today, that initiative has seeded a movement. The Wild Salmon Center-convened Oregon Water Partnership is a powerful and respected coalition of conservation groups that give our rivers—and all who depend on them—a strong, unified voice in the state capitol.

In 2022, our coalition convinced state legislators to allocate \$25.6 million for drought-resilient aquatic habitats. In 2023, we helped to shape investments of \$174 million for water security and more. We've won reforms that keep more water in streams for fish during the dry seasons. We've defended vital water conservation programs with real benefits for fish and farmers. And we've made the case that the state agencies stewarding this public resource deserve sustained funding now, and in the future.

In the years to come, our coalition will continue to push for state laws and budgets that keep Oregon's stronghold rivers healthy and flowing, from modernizing century-old water laws to ensuring our environment is central in water management decisions. These wins will reach communities across the state—as well as the wildlife and wild salmon that enrich our lives.

Learn more at oregonwaterpartnership.org.

OREGON SUCCESSES

Oregon Water Partnership—launched by Wild Salmon Center in 2022—has secured more than **\$200 million** to date for **drought resilience, water security, data collection, and streamflow restoration**.

In 2024, Wild Salmon Center and our partners won critical funds to support the **reintroduction of spring Chinook to the Klamath River** following the largest dam removal project in the world.

5-YEAR GOAL: Oregon Water Partnership aims to advance reforms that bring state water data into the 21st century, support smart water management, and keep cold water in streams for the benefit of fish and wildlife.




WSC's Cyndi Curtis speaks to the Oregon Board of Forestry, as part of a growing North Coast movement for stronger conservation on state forest land.



Standing tall for Oregon forests

Oregonians have long fought for a plan to conserve half of Western Oregon state forests—**315,000 acres of mature stands and world-class salmon rivers**—despite ferocious timber industry pushback. Our Stand Tall Oregon campaign advanced in 2024, when the State Board of Forestry moved this plan to a final federal review. This promising step was powered by thousands of Oregonians, especially on the North Coast. Now, we're working with these local champions to sustain strong forest policy on private and public lands across Oregon's coastal strongholds.

Olivia Leigh Nowak



In Oregon and beyond, our water reality is changing. We must reform water laws to ensure a future in which people and fish can thrive together.

**WILSON RIVER
ESTUARY, Oregon.**
Salmon streams are running hotter and drier in the summer, even as coastal communities face higher winter flood risk. We must update land and water protections for a new climate reality.

A close-up, high-angle photograph of a rainbow trout in mid-leap. The fish is positioned diagonally across the frame, moving from the bottom left towards the top right. Its body is covered in iridescent scales that shimmer with shades of green, blue, and purple, with a prominent pinkish-red stripe running horizontally along its side. The fish's mouth is slightly open, and its eyes are focused forward. The background consists of dark, wet, and textured rocks, with white water splashing around the fish's head and tail, creating a sense of motion and energy.

WILD SALMON DIVERSITY

In every stronghold, fisheries must be managed for both abundance and wild fish diversity—the genetic superpower that has enabled salmon and steelhead to survive ice ages, floods, and dramatic climate changes.



Steelhead, Olympic Peninsula, Washington

John McMillan



IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

89 RIVERS prioritized for wild fish biodiversity.

GENETIC DIVERSITY mapped for Chinook salmon across the West Coast, from California to Alaska.

Six British Columbia locations now count fish with Salmon Vision's **ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY**.

A province-wide plan for British Columbia

From the Chilcotin in the southeast to transboundary rivers like the Taku in the northwest, First Nations and conservation groups are championing healthy watersheds throughout British Columbia. Now, Wild Salmon Center aims to connect these groups for collective power.

“Recent political shifts are introducing volatility for salmon conservation,” says Greg Knox, Wild Salmon Center’s new British Columbia director and the former leader of core partner SkeenaWild. “It’s urgent that we unite to protect our rivers and salmon communities.”

Political leaders in Canada and beyond are under pressure to forgo environmental priorities and fast-track industrial development and commercial fishing, Knox says. That shift comes as droughts, floods, and heat waves exacerbate

widespread declines among B.C. wild fish runs. But Wild Salmon Center can help local partners meet this moment.

“We’re committed to understanding the needs of salmon conservationists across B.C.,” Knox says. “Wild Salmon Center can help build that consensus around key policies.”

He’s already working with partners to identify actions for the coming years—from campaigns to secure new protected areas in watersheds like the Skeena and Nass to research that better informs existing fisheries while accelerating the transition to selective fisheries. Local partners might think their work only impacts local rivers, but Knox says they’re part of our larger strategy.

“Every salmon steward is part of something bigger,” Knox says. “The more we can connect, share data, and build consensus, the more powerful and enduring our story will be.”

BRITISH COLUMBIA SUCCESSES

In 2024, the Nuxalk First Nation debuted **two fish wheels on the Bella Coola River**, part of an innovative selective fishing program supported by Wild Salmon Center.

In 2024, we supported the Heiltsuk First Nation’s successful launch of a **terminal sockeye fishery on the Koeys River** on the B.C. Central Coast.

5-YEAR GOAL: Secure new protected areas in the Skeena, Taku, and Nass watersheds; expand Salmon Vision’s artificial intelligence-driven fish counting technology to rivers across British Columbia and beyond.



Heiltsuk First Nation fisheries technician Richard Wilson-Hall **seining sockeye salmon** for research near the Koeys River fish weir on British Columbia’s Central Coast.



Advancing Indigenous, terminal, and selective fisheries

Across British Columbia, marine mixed-population fisheries can harm at-risk species like steelhead and sockeye. Science shows that selective and terminal fisheries successfully lower risks by bypassing or releasing vulnerable wild fish. With support from The Stronghold Fund (see page 26), Wild Salmon Center scientists and program staff are building partnerships with First Nations like the **Heiltsuk, Nuxalk, and Taku River Tlingit First Nations** that aim to bring fisheries—and fish data—closer to home.

A photograph of a fish weir in a river, with workers in waders and a dense forest in the background. The weir is constructed from metal frames and corrugated metal sheets. Several workers are visible, some standing in the water and others on the shore. The water is calm, reflecting the surrounding greenery and the structure of the weir. The background is a dense forest of tall evergreen trees.

Through technologies both new and ancient, we're
advancing the science to better understand—and
protect—wild fish diversity across the North Pacific.

A Gitga'at First Nation
FISH WEIR, Kitkiata Inlet,
British Columbia. This
site is one of six now
using our Salmon Vision
artificial intelligence
technology to automate
fish counting.

The stronghold strategy delivers global benefits

Wild Salmon Center works in some of the world's most beautiful watersheds, from Bristol Bay, Alaska, to the Oregon Coast. We do this because proactive protections for these special places deliver benefits far beyond the rivers that salmon call home.

"The science is clear that healthy salmon rivers can safeguard food security, plant and animal diversity, and climate resilience," says Wild Salmon Center President and CEO Guido Rahr. "So we built a strategy centered on some of the best salmon river systems in the world."

Strongholds—a select group of salmon, steelhead, and trout systems comprising 119 distinct watersheds—are distinguished by relatively high levels of wild salmon abundance, productivity, and diversity, along with habitat quality capable of sustaining wild fish for decades.

Our strategy aims to permanently protect these special places from threats now breaking other salmon rivers. For more than 25 years, this strategy has guided Wild Salmon Center's work across the North Pacific. Now, Rahr is the lead author of a new study in the peer-reviewed journal *Fisheries* that shares the strategy's impacts with the global scientific community. Since its conception, Wild Salmon Center and our partners have protected 35.7 million acres of overall habitat and prioritized wild fish health and abundance in 89 rivers across the North Pacific. For each, success rests on three pillars: layered protections for land and water; a science-based fisheries management emphasis on wild fish diversity; and a culture of local stewardship.

"Strongholds are already working hard on our behalf," says study co-author and Wild Salmon Center Science Director Dr. Matthew Sloat. "Their long-term protection is one of the smartest, most cost-effective investments we can make for future generations."

SUCCESS ACROSS THE NORTH PACIFIC

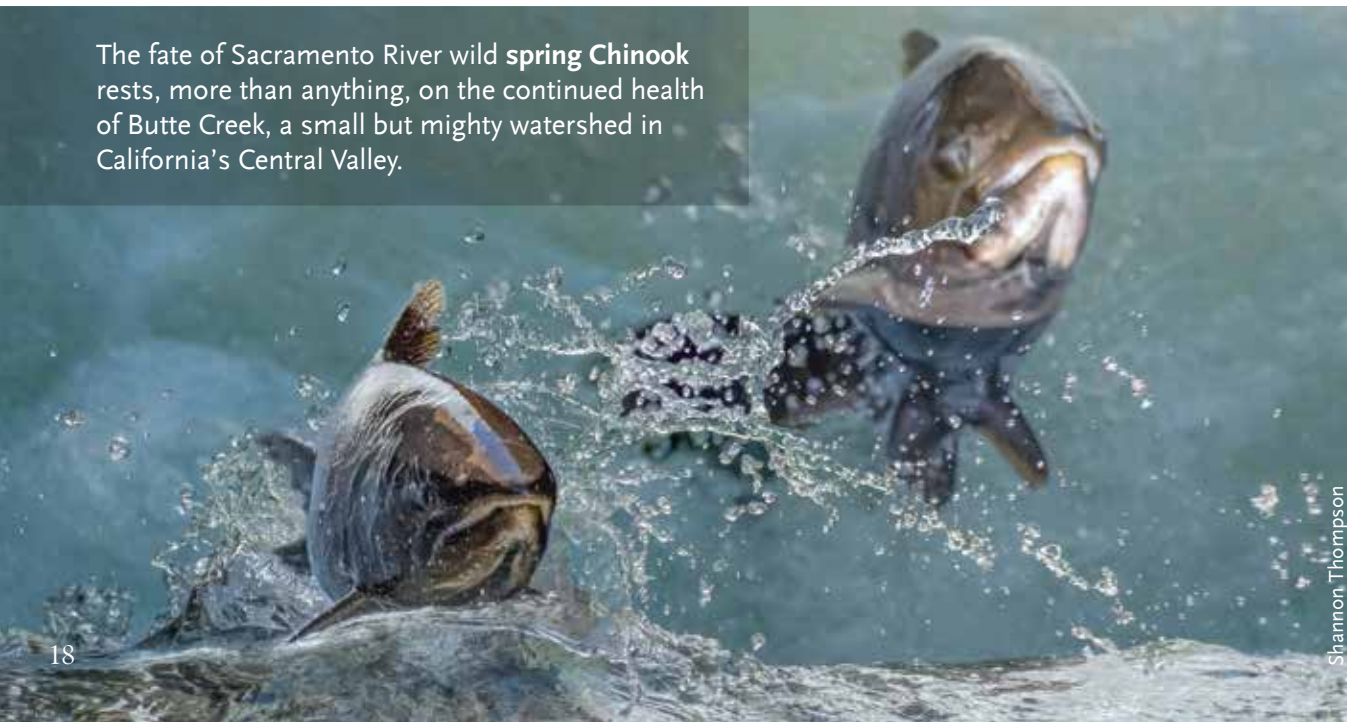
With the stronghold strategy as our guide, Wild Salmon Center and our partners have protected **35.7 million acres of overall habitat across the North Pacific.**

In 89 rivers—including much of the Oregon Coast—fisheries managers now prioritize wild fish diversity alongside abundance.

BY 2032, we aim to secure durable protections for land, water, and wild fish across our network.




The fate of Sacramento River wild **spring Chinook** rests, more than anything, on the continued health of Butte Creek, a small but mighty watershed in California's Central Valley.



Cutting-edge genetic analysis for everyone

The genetics that drive Chinook run timing are well-studied in California, Oregon, and Washington. But this data is scarce in northern strongholds. To address this gap, Wild Salmon Center scientists are studying **salmon DNA** from the Dean and Taku Rivers in British Columbia. Along the way, we developed a cutting-edge genetics method called AmpliRAD that makes analysis more efficient and accessible for labs with limited resources. This allows fisheries managers to know exactly which salmon runs are entering their fisheries.



Our strategy is about more than salmon, steelhead, and trout. It's about a legacy of wild places that we inherited, and that we owe to future generations.

Every year, more than two million salmon return to Alaska's COPPER RIVER. This stronghold supports a thriving fishery, but its wild fish diversity remains understudied. Our scientists aim to fill these data gaps.



LOCAL STEWARDS

Every stronghold needs local land and water guardians who stand ready to defend and restore their home river from threats.



Quillayute River, Olympic Peninsula, Washington

Brady Holden



IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

15 PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS founded since 1992.

108 RESTORATION PROJECTS launched in Oregon and Washington to date.

With our partners, led **KEY WINS** for British Columbia salmon: from a multi-year chum fishery closure to a blocked LNG project on the Skeena.

Scaling a Northwest restoration vision

Across the Pacific Northwest, we're sizing habitat restoration for long-term success. On Washington's Olympic Peninsula, that looks like Anton Creek's new 72-foot-long culvert: built for the floods of the future, wide enough to go unnoticed by traveling salmon, steelhead, and lamprey.

It also looks like Five Mile Bell on Oregon's Siuslaw River, where crews are pursuing an ambitious "river reset." The work—smoothing away incised, abandoned ditches and culverts, removing aggressive invasive species like reed canarygrass—is freeing the lower Siuslaw to reclaim its path and rebuild rearing habitat for Tahkenitch Lake salmon.

Wild Salmon Center's habitat restoration work reaches some of the most remote corners of the Pacific Northwest. And our work is accelerating.

To date, projects completed by our Cold Water Connection Campaign in Washington and Oregon's WSC-led Coast Coho Partnership have opened up more than 60 river miles and 1,575 instream, riparian, and upland habitat acres for salmon and steelhead. This work is a major driver of the region's growing restoration economy, supporting hundreds of well-paying rural jobs from the Rogue River to Wáatch Creek in the Olympic Peninsula's far northwest.

As climate change and habitat loss impact many West Coast salmon and steelhead populations, habitat restoration is a vital lever to help keep southern strongholds intact. That's why, in the next few years, we're expanding our prioritized restoration plans to nine additional river systems across Oregon and Washington: a vision scaled, like our culverts, for long-term success.

WASHINGTON AND OREGON SUCCESSES

Wild Salmon Center and our partners have completed **60 restoration projects** in coastal Oregon and Washington, reopening and restoring over **60 river miles** for wild fish.

Since 2014, we have launched **108 new projects** in watersheds from the Coos to the Quillayute, from small-stream beaver recruitment to ambitious, multi-year "river resets."

5-YEAR GOAL: Scale our partner-based restoration work to recover Oregon Coast coho salmon and other species to **21 river systems**.




Over the past three decades, **Oregon Coast coho** salmon abundance has increased overall—even in years of unfavorable ocean conditions. Habitat restoration is a key driver of these positive trends.



Coho salmon: the stronghold strategy's promise in action

By the numbers, 2024 was a good year for Oregon Coast coho. Rising abundance in river systems including the Elk and Rogue follow gradual improvements for coho populations since their 1998 listing under the Endangered Species Act—which reduced harvest pressure, dramatically reduced hatchery fish production, and brought **major investments to coho habitat restoration**. In recent years, federal agencies like NOAA have directly linked Oregon Coast coho recovery to restoration work by Wild Salmon Center and our partners.

Jason Ching



Across the Pacific Northwest, local partners share
our vision of salmon rivers fully restored.

Juvenile coho and trout
are already finding their
way through our new, fish-
friendly culvert on Anton
Creek, in Washington's
**QUILLAYUTE RIVER
BASIN.**

Salmon stewards across the Pacific

More than 30 years ago, Wild Salmon Center's work began in Russia. The Kamchatka Steelhead Project united scientists and fly fishers on both sides of the Pacific to protect the peninsula's remarkable wild fish runs.

We have always believed that salmon can unite people across the world. As our work has expanded from California's Central Valley to the steppes of Mongolia, our partnerships have grown in scope and size.

Some partnerships, like our campaign with Skeena Wild and First Nations to stop a gas export project, succeed by meeting a particular moment. Others, like our Bristol Bay Defense Fund coalition led by the United Tribes of Bristol Bay, aim for a larger vision. Local stewards and their organizations are the heart of our stronghold strategy in action.

NEW PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS

GeneSolve Sockeye Project

In 2024, Wild Salmon Center and our partners advanced a project to help fisheries managers understand what salmon they're catching—and protect nontarget runs—through new genomic tools. Led by Wild Salmon Center and Simon Fraser University's Salmon Watersheds Lab, this partnership includes the Taku River Tlingit, Heiltsuk, Nuxalk, and Kitasoo Xai'Xais First Nations, and the Molecular Genetics Lab at Canada's Department of Oceans and Fisheries.

Coos Basin Partnership

In Oregon, Wild Salmon Center's Coast Coho Partnership builds roadmaps to restore whole watersheds—and then brings them to life. It can take years to build our strategic action plans. Our scientific rigor means that, once

complete, these plans become powerful organizing tools for new partnerships. In 2024, the newly-formed Coos Basin Partnership leveraged our plan for their watershed to win \$11 million in state grants, setting restoration work in motion.

Friends of Butte Creek

In 2024, Wild Salmon Center partnered with local group Friends of Butte Creek to bring our strategic action plan model to this small but important watershed in California's Central Valley. We're building new alliances with local farmers, duck hunters, and others to protect Butte Creek's wild, amazingly resilient spring Chinook—one of the last such viable runs in California.

Siberian taimen are the apex predators in some of Asia's most spectacular river systems. WSC is working with Mongolian leaders to protect these giants and the rivers they call home.




The International Taimen Initiative



Taimen habitat spans vast tracts of Asia and Europe, from the Arctic Circle to the upper Yangtze River in China. Yet so much remains unknown about this mysterious and ancient apex predator—the world's largest salmonid.

In 2022, Wild Salmon Center launched the International Taimen Initiative to advance science and develop conservation plans to better protect this vulnerable species. In 2024, this partnership helped lay the groundwork for **Mongolia's first national meeting on fisheries** in more than 60 years.

Mongolia River Outfitters



Salmon—and their home rivers—have the power
to unite people across the Pacific Rim.

The **SMITH RIVER** is home to wild coho, fall Chinook, cutthroat trout, and winter steelhead. Wild Salmon Center and the Smith River Alliance have frequently partnered over the past two decades to protect this key California stronghold.

The Stronghold Fund

Partners are core to the stronghold strategy. Local stewards are often the first to learn of new threats, and are the best-positioned to take swift action. The Stronghold Fund—a first-of-its-kind impact fund for salmon and steelhead conservation—helps Wild Salmon Center and our partners seize powerful new opportunities.

2024 CAMPAIGN AND PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Defend the West Susitna

Purpose: Advance our coalition's work to stop a 100-mile industrial road from opening the salmon-rich West Susitna region to speculative mining interests.
Partners: Alaska Range Alliance, SalmonState

Skeena watershed key initiatives

Purpose: Build capacity of core partner SkeenaWild to pursue opportunities, including a North Coast oil tanker ban, new protected areas with First Nations partners, and fisheries reform.
Partner: SkeenaWild Conservation Trust

British Columbia Central Coast wild fish research

Purpose: Fill critical data gaps for wild sockeye, steelhead, and Chinook runs through genetic tools, temperature monitoring, and lake surveys on wild fish rearing and hatchery fish impacts.
Partner: Coastal Rivers Conservancy

Stand Tall Oregon campaign

Purpose: Grow our grassroots outreach campaign to finalize a state forests habitat conservation plan that protects 315,000 acres of coastal rainforest in Western Oregon.
Partner: Stand Tall Oregon campaign

Pacific Salmon Treaty Indigenous leadership

Purpose: To convene United States Tribes, Alaska Native organizations, and the British Columbia-based Pacific Salmon Commission First Nations Caucus for greater consensus ahead of negotiations for the Pacific Salmon Treaty, a powerful international fisheries pact.
Partner: First Nations Fisheries Council

Taku River climate change assessment

Purpose: Support work by the Taku River Tlingit First Nation to assess climate change vulnerabilities of Taku River wild sockeye, coho, and Chinook runs.
Partners: Taku River Tlingit First Nation, Simon Fraser University

British Columbia aquaculture, fisheries reform

Purpose: Maintain pressure on federal agencies to close open net-pen salmon farms; advance fisheries reforms that reduce conservation risks for wild fish ahead of Pacific Salmon Treaty negotiations in 2026-2027.
Partner: Watershed Watch Salmon Society



First Nations-led salmon project inventory


Purpose: Create a priority list of needed salmon habitat restoration projects across British Columbia through direct outreach with First Nations.
Partner: First Nations Wild Salmon Alliance

Our partner championed a fishery closure. It's yielding results.



In 2024, the Coastal Rivers Conservancy—a longtime grantee of The Stronghold Fund—successfully advocated to extend a 2022 closure of British Columbia's Area 8 chum salmon commercial fishery. This move aims to recover Central Coast chum runs and **prevent the bycatch of vulnerable sockeye, Chinook, and steelhead.** Greater numbers of these nontarget species have since been reported in watersheds, including the Dean and Atnarko.





Local stewards stand ready to protect
their home rivers. They're essential to
our strategy in action.

The Nuxalk First Nation is a key Wild Salmon Center partner in systems like the **DEAN RIVER** on British Columbia's Central Coast.

2024 Donors

Thanks to the generosity of our donors—past and present—we’re making progress for the Pacific’s salmon strongholds. We’re profoundly grateful to the foundations, companies, government agencies, and individuals whose support makes this impact possible.

WSC’s full list of supporters can be found at wildsalmoncenter.org/2024honor-roll

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US Fish and Wildlife Service
USDA Forest Service

Foundations

Amalgamated Foundation
Anonymous
Autzen Foundation
Bella Vista Foundation
Bird Alliance of Oregon
Brothers Brook Foundation
The Builders Initiative



WSC staff and Marshall Gilchrist of the Wallace Research Foundation on Washington's Olympic Peninsula.

Burning Foundation
California Community Foundation
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Coast Salmon Partnership
The Conservation Alliance
Donald Slavik Family Foundation
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Edgerton Foundation
Flyfisher Foundation
Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation



Sarah Kotten

Stronghold Guardian: Sarah Kotten

Sarah Kotten lights up when she talks about salmon.

“I remember the first time I saw them in the wild,” she says. “I spotted them swimming upstream while hiking along the Samish River, and I was immediately in awe. I’d known how amazing salmon are, but some things you have to experience to understand.”

A talented artist and avid gardener now living in Bow, Washington, Sarah grew up between Chicago and New York. Her fascination with the natural world began during time spent fishing as a child on a quiet lake in the Midwest. But it was moving to the Pacific Northwest and seeing the annual migration of salmon that rekindled her love of the wild and desire to protect it.

“They’re awe-inspiring,” she says. “These fish and their journey home take my breath away—it’s just magical. Salmon are the lifeblood for so much in the Pacific Northwest. The more I saw, the more I understood just how important these creatures are to the wellbeing of everything around me. I had to find a way to help.”

“Salmon are the lifeblood for so much in the Pacific Northwest. The more I saw, the more I understood just how important these creatures are to the wellbeing of everything around me.”

Sarah’s fascination led her to read *Stronghold*, the biography of Wild Salmon Center President and CEO Guido Rahr by Tucker Malarkey. “The vision just knocked my socks off. I felt like I found an organization that had a clear strategy and shared my love for wild salmon,” she says.

Since then, Sarah has become an annual donor and recently decided to join our Stronghold Guardian circle with a monthly gift.

“Monthly giving feels extra meaningful,” she says. “It’s a steady reminder of the ongoing work that matters so much to me. And it’s an easy way to give that brings me a little joy every month.”

Join Sarah and our other Stronghold Guardians by signing up for a monthly gift at wildsalmoncenter.org/recurring

Wild Salmon Center is a grantee of [The Conservation Alliance](#), a group of outdoor industry companies that disburses collective annual membership dues to grassroots environmental organizations.

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WSC's Morgan Urquia (left) at Alaska's SalmonFest.

Wild Salmon Center and Pacific Coast Salmon Coalition staff and interns at a Cascade Marsh restoration project near Washington's Dickey River.



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Wild Salmon Center has been approved to receive grants through the [One Percent for the Planet](#) program.



Our Legacy Circle

Wild Salmon Center's Legacy Circle includes a dedicated group of supporters who have chosen to include a gift to WSC in their estate plans. In doing so, these individuals are helping to ensure that stronghold watersheds remain healthy and intact for generations to come. **Thank you.**

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*Indicates Legacy Circle members who have passed.

If you would like to notify WSC of your intent to make a bequest gift, or if you believe your name has been omitted in error, please contact

Kim Kosa at 971-255-5562 or kkosa@wildsalmoncenter.org.

Learn more at wildsalmoncenter.org/legacy.

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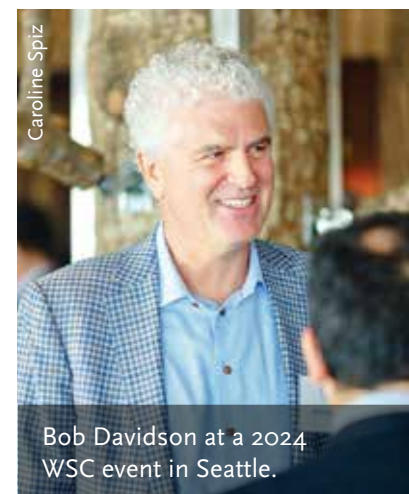
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Bob Davidson at a 2024 WSC event in Seattle.

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* \$1,000 and above. See a full list at wildsalmoncenter.org/2024honor-roll.



2024 event in Seattle with WSC staff, board members, and guests.

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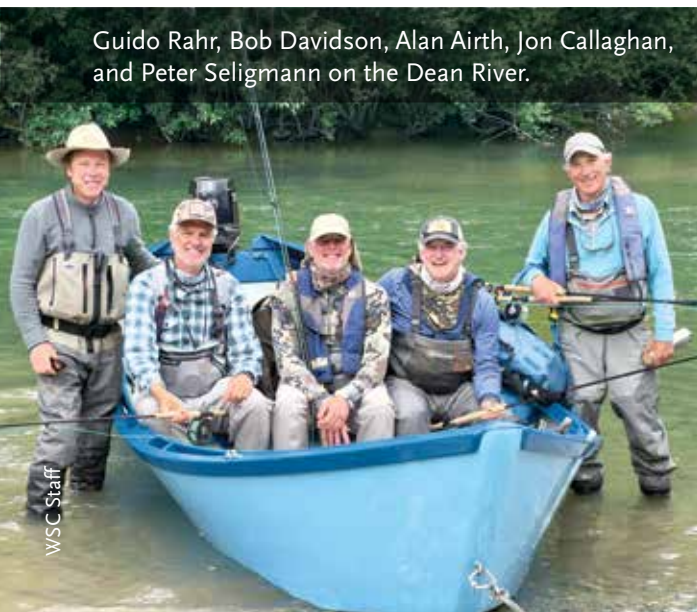
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Platinum
Transparency
2025

Candid.

Wild Salmon Center has received the [GuideStar platinum seal](#) for transparency.



Guido Rahr, Bob Davidson, Alan Airth, Jon Callaghan, and Peter Seligmann on the Dean River.



WSC's Senior Mongolia Consultant Dr. Saulyegul Avlyush on the banks of Oregon's Wood River, a tributary of Upper Klamath Lake.

Salmon science from Mongolia to the Klamath

In October 2024, Dr. Avlyush and a contingent of Mongolian scientists met with Wild Salmon Center scientists and scientific advisors to discuss salmon recovery efforts in the Klamath Basin. A freshwater ecologist, Dr. Avlyush aims to build momentum for wild fish conservation in her nation, and drive research and policy to protect taimen—the world's largest salmonid—through our International Taimen Initiative.

Amy and Hiroshi Myoraku
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Joe Marsh with a Hoh River winter steelhead.



WSC's Cyndi Curtis and U.S. Forest Service fisheries biologist Paul Burns at a restoration project site on Oregon's Siuslaw River.

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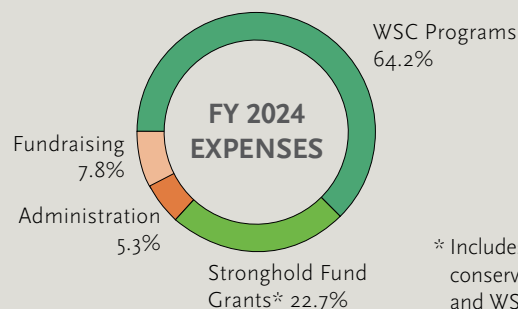
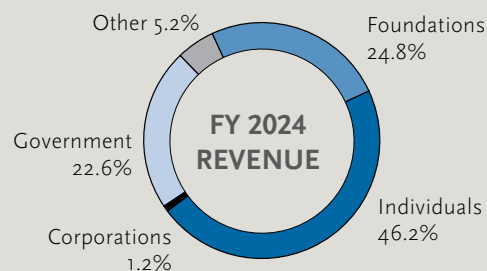
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Coquille Tribal biologist Jamie Villa (left) and WSC's Ramona DeNies and Dr. Tim Elder on Oregon's Coquille River.

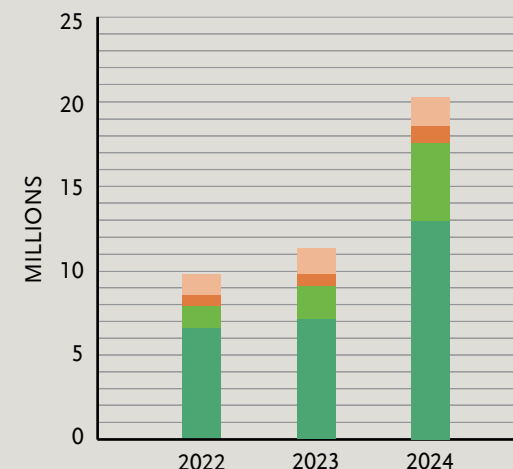
Financials: Meeting the moment

As part of our 2032 goal to secure durable protection for salmon strongholds, WSC is making major investments in our conservation projects, partners, and internal staff. As a result, WSC's operating budget will continue to grow over the next several years. These investments are fueled largely by our most committed private funders, as well as recent public grants for large-scale habitat restoration (read more on page 22). The continued support of donors like you will be instrumental to our success.



* Includes subgrants to conservation partners and WSC programs.

WSC Operational Budget 2022-2024



A pair of hands is shown holding a small evergreen sapling with a mossy root ball. The background is a blurred forest with tall trees and sunlight filtering through the leaves. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

THE GIFT *of a* LIFETIME

Including a gift to Wild Salmon Center in your will—or designating us as a beneficiary of your trust, retirement plan, or life insurance policy—are easy ways to ensure future generations know the joy of wading in cold, clean rivers, exploring old-growth forests, and observing wild fish heading upstream.

Ready to get started? Contact Kim Kosa at 971-255-5562 or visit wildsalmoncenter.org/legacy to learn more about bequests and WSC's free will-writing tool.



The People of Wild Salmon Center

Andrea Lomas



WSC Staff

Above: WSC staff on the Deschutes River, Oregon. Top: Portland-based and visiting staff at Spring 2025 Board meeting.

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Loretta Keller

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Randall Peterman, Ph.D., Simon Fraser University, retired
Michael Miller, Ph.D., UC Davis



Ed Bowles



Amy Errett



Joel Starlund

Welcome new board members:

Ed Bowles was the Fish Division Administrator for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife from 2000 until his 2020 retirement. Bowles spent his earlier career with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and now works on Columbia Basin salmon recovery with ODFW and the State of Oregon. He enjoys swinging flies in tidewater and spending time with his granddaughter.

Amy Errett founded Madison Reed, named after her daughter, with over 30 years of business and operating expertise as an entrepreneur, venture capitalist, and social mission visionary. Errett, a passionate fly fisher, is also a Venture Partner at True Ventures, focusing on consumer startup investments, and previously was a general partner at Maveron. She lives in the Bay Area with her wife and pet Bernedoodle.

Joel Starlund (Sk'anism Tsa 'Win'Giit) is the Executive Director of the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs, Wilp Wii Litsxw of the Lax Gibuu Clan with territory at Meziadin. Starlund has been a leader in the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs Office for 13 years, with a record of successful initiatives and projects for the Gitanyow Huwilp. Starlund is an avid hunter, fisher, and trapper.

Ambassador Council

Billy Blewett, British Columbia
Kate Crump, Oregon/Alaska
Jeff Hickman, Oregon/B.C.
Dan Michels, Alaska
Ken Morrish, Oregon
April Vokey, B.C./Australia

Front cover: Dean River, British Columbia (Guido Rahr). Back cover: bear in pursuit of salmon, IMAX film still, Bristol Bay, Alaska (Dorsey Pictures).

LIGHTS! CAMERA! SALMON!

The world's first-ever IMAX salmon film hits theaters in 2026. From VIP screenings to action-packed events, you can share the spotlight with Wild Salmon Center and our global community of wild salmon fans.



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